Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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EDITORIAL

Here we go into a second volume!

We must begin this fifth issue by stating some rather unpalatable facts.

We have met our first year's costs and we are left with a small surplus in hand, thanks to an initial hand-out from Spanish Main funds, a donation from John Fosbery, and the commission from mini-packets and private treaty sales. Although we have finished the year solvent, this has been a hand-to-mouth existence, and it was generally agreed that, after the fourth issue, we would put the Group's funds on a more regular basis. We had thought £3 a sensible sum for a year's financing; it would have saved us from being dependent on commission from packets, which may not exist much longer because the supply of specialist-quality material has depended very largely on John Fosbery, who may no longer be able to supply Group needs and the needs of the General Packet, now supervised by George Richardson. The Club AGM in its wisdom fixed the Group membership subscription at £2 (or US$5 for overseas members). This will just about cover the costs of producing this Newsletter, assuming that most of the members who have been receiving it are willing to pay up promptly. It will not leave much (if any) surplus for other activities, such as meetings or publications, for which we shall continue to be dependent on Spanish Main funds. The future is therefore one of some uncertainty. Group subscriptions should be sent to the Editor at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that your name and address appears on the mailing list in time for the next issue. It is doubtful if any further issues will be sent gratis.

Members are reminded that Group information is dependent on almost everyone being willing to contribute something. Short articles and items for Causerie are beginning to dry up, which is a pity, because we have been well supplied until recently. Questions and suggested answers must be forthcoming if we are to continue an interesting exchange of information. More articles are needed, please. So far we have published almost everything we have received, which is not entirely as it should be; an Editor needs choice to produce wothwhile copy. Please do not sit back and leave it to someone else! This is your Newsletter, and if it is to continue you must support it - with material and finance.

The future of mini-packets is problematical; if George Richardson is to make a success of Spanish Main's packets, he will need all the help he can muster, and it is possible that Groups must leave the field free to him for the time being. In our next issue we shall tell you what is needed for Club and/or Group.

The next Spanish Main meeting is to be mounted by this Group. There will be displays of Central American countries at the Victory Services Club, Seymour Street, near Marble Arch, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. approx. on Saturday 19th September. We need displays (please inform the Editor if you can help) and a good audience. A live society needs active members. Please do what you can to keep us alive - and kicking.

Bernard Davies

CAUSERIE

From this point on, we are adopting a more logical numbering system which we hope will aid easy reference; the first figure represents the Newsletter number, the subsequent figure(s) the sequence in that issue.

We thank Harold Walker for responding to Causerie 34 in our last issue. He sends a selection of thirteen pen cancels, which we are forwarding to D.N. Kilner. Unfortunately the illustrations will not reproduce. In his letter, Harold also tells us that he has a copy of the stamp discovered by Leo Malz (see Causerie 30 of our last issue).

501. Mike Birks would like to determine the extent to which Cartero marks were used in Nicaragua, and asks for help. Below are illustrated the marks that he has, and the date(s) of usage. If you can extend these dates, identify the missing marks or extend the listing please write via the Editor. It is hoped to produce as complete a listing as possible in a future Newsletter.

2.9.97 to 8.10.00

25.10.04

1.5.01

20.12.04

10.11.04

8.8.98

15.2.04

502. George Richardson has recently purchased a f.d.c. of Costa Rica 410-2 Football Ch., clearly postmarked 13th May 1946. Gibbons, Saenz and Minkus all give the date as 12th May; Sanabria (1950) however quotes 13th May. Can anyone shed any light? Has anyone a f.d.c. dated 12th May?

503. Alan Barrow asks what is the purpose of the label used as a seal on the Managua to New York 1921 cover? The cover is a 2c postal stationery envelope, additionally bearing a 1c obligatory tax adhesive, and Alan asks if the rate is correct?

504. Alan also asks about a cover sent to Canada in 1953, bearing two SG 807 of Nicaragua (1933) and one SG 959 (1937) with one SG 1146a (1949). The widely separated dates of the stamps used on this cover lead him to ask whether stamps of Nicaragua are ever actually invalidated, or can they be used at any time providing the postage rate is correct?

505. Chris Bettis aska about two Guatemala entires, one 1864 to New York with manuscript "via Panama" and "Steamship 10" in black circle, the other 1865 to New York with "Guatemala" in double circle, "franco" and "Steamship 10" in black circle. He presumes that these entires were bagged up in Guatemala City and taken to Panama for onward delivery to the U.S. in accordance with the pact of 1862. He asks (i) Why has the 1865 entire a Guatemala postal marking whilst the 1864 has none? (ii) Were the steamship marks only for the duration of the pact, or if not, what was their period of use? (iii) Are there any steamship marks used pre-1871? (iv) Where were the marks applied? Chris states that he has also seen a mark "Steamship 20" in 1863, and the same marks from various L.A. countries from 1854-64.

The East Coast of Nicaragua and its Postal Services

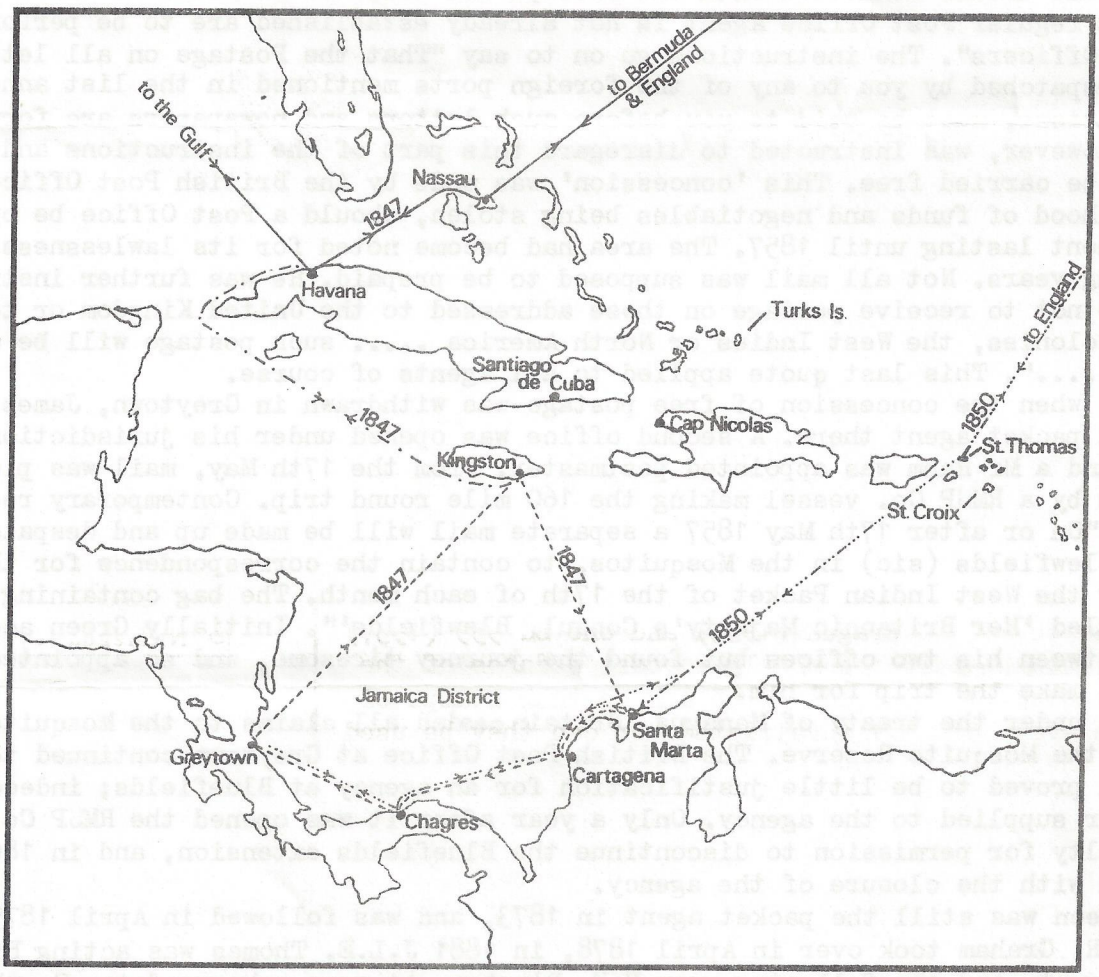
by Michael P. Birks

The British Postal Agency at Greytown (Continued from Issue 4)

St. Thomas was still a major link in the RMSP Co. service, providing a repair base for the steamers, and as the centre of distribution and collection of mail from the British Caribbean Islands. Under the new contract St. Thomas became a branch, and received mails from, and delivered mails to Bermuda, which was now the major transfer port for all the Caribbean area for the steamships of the RMSP Co.. The mails from Southampton left on the 2nd of the month and arrived in Bermuda on the 18th. In a letter to James Taylor, Deputy Postmaster General in Bermuda, which was published in the Royal Gazette, J. Kains instructed that "You will send as forward ..... to Jamaica, letters for ..... San Juan de Nicaragua". The following day the ship left via Nassau for Havana, where it arrived on the 25th, and the Greytown mails were unloaded. From Havana the ship sailed into the Gulf, returning to Havana on the 25th of the following month, and arriving in Southampton on the 22nd of the month after that. This made a round trip for the steamer cf about eleven weeks.

From Havana the mails were carried on another ship to Jamaica, from where a third ship carried them via Santa Marta and Cartagena to Greytown. Details of timings of these routes are not to hand, other than a brief mention in Kains letter to Taylor mentioned earlier, which says, "On return, the steamer via Nassau (with mails for Havana), ... should reach Bermuda on the 4th of each month at 6.00 a.m., ... on the 6th ..... at noon you must be prepared to dispatch your mail to England". Bermuda was now as important as St. Thomas for the conveyance of the Caribbean mails.

Routes of 1847 and 1850



This latest route was again changed in August 1850, following the signing of a new contract on 5th July 1850. These changes were directly brought about as a result of the discovery of gold in California, in 1848, and the opening up of the Isthmus of Panama. The Bermuda Royal Gazette notes that the final sailing of a RMSP Co. vessel under the old

contract was the 'Great Western', which sailed on the 3rd, for England. The major terminal once again became St. Thomas, and Bermuda was later to be served by ships of the Cunard line. Nassau received a call once a month, usually a schooner. This concentration of all local West Indian services at St. Thomas, cut working costs by providing a straight run from Southampton. However it was not without its disadvantages as this port was subject to hurricanes and yellow fever, resulting in a high death rate amongst the Company's personnel.

The new route emphasised the growing importance of Greytown, by including the town in the main trunk line. This growing importance was due to the fact that Greytown was the disembarkation point for steamers from New York, for transisthmian travel to the Californian goldfields. Following ratification of a canal contract in August 1849, Cornelius Vanderbilt, not the first but certainly the best known operator, prepared to open a transit across the isthmus. In reality he had no intention of building a canal, but used this excuse to obtain permission from the Nicaraguan government for the conveyance of passengers across the isthmus, whilst this fictitious canal was being built. By August 1850, when the original contract was amended, work was well in hand under Colonel Orville W. Childs and his fourteen engineers, on the clearing of the river.

The steamers left Southampton on the 2nd and 17th of each month, and made their way to Greytown via St. Thomas, Santa Marta, Cartagena and Chagres, where they arrived after a voyage of about 29 days, including time spent in port. Receivers of letters at Greytown had four days in which to prepare their reply, if it was to return on the same steamship. The course of post, which did not include a stop at Santa Marta on the return journey, was 62 days.

James Green's duties, as senior British official in Greytown, included charge of the mails. His authority came from "Instructions to British Consuls and other Persons appointed to act as Agents of the General Post Office in Foreign Ports in North and South America and the West Indies", dated 13th October 1841. In these instructions it states that "The Treasury decided that all duties connected with the receipt and despatch of Mails at those Foreign Ports where a regular Post Office Agent is not already established are to be performed by the Consular Officers". The instructions go on to say "That the Postage on all letters and Newspapers despatched by you to any of the foreign ports mentioned in the list annexed to these instructions, must be paid to you before such letters and newspapers are forwarded". James Green however, was instructed to disregard this part of the instructions and allow the mails to be carried free. This 'concession' was made by the British Post Office owing to the likelihood of funds and negotiables being stolen, should a Post Office be opened, this arrangement lasting until 1857. The area had become noted for its lawlessness during the preceeding years. Not all mail was supposed to be prepaid. He was further instructed "that you are not to receive postage on those addressed to the United Kingdom or to any of the British Colonies, the West Indies or North America ..... such postage will be collected on delivery .....". This last quote applied to all agents of course.

In 1857, when the concession of free postage was withdrawn in Greytown, James Green was appointed packet agent there. A second office was opened under his jurisdiction in Bluefields, and a Mr Rahm was appointed postmaster. From the 17th May, mail was picked up at Bluefields by a RMSP Co. vessel making the 160 mile round trip. Contemporary records tell us that "On or after 17th May 1857 a separate mail will be made up and despatched to the port of Blewfields (sic) in the Mosquitos, to contain the correspondence for the Mosquitos, by the West Indian Packet of the 17th of each month. The bag containing this mail will be labelled 'Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, Blewfields'". Initially Green accompanied the vessel between his two offices but found the journey tiresome, and so appointed Mr Rahm his deputy to make the trip for him.

In 1860, under the treaty of Managua, Britain ceeded all claims to the Mosquito Coast, which became the Mosquito Reserve. The British Post Office at Greytown continued to function but there had proved to be little justification for an agency at Bluefields; indeed no date stamp was ever supplied to the agency. Only a year after it was opened the RMSP Co. applied to the Admiralty for permission to discontinue the Bluefields extension, and in 1863 the service ended with the closure of the agency.

James Green was still the packet agent in 1873, and was followed in April 1875 by A. Gollan. J.R. Graham took over in April 1878, in 1881 J.L.E. Thomas was acting British Post Office agent, and the following year H.F. Bingham. At some unknown date, S. Shepherd was the agent for the RMSP Co..

On May 1st 1882, Nicaragua joined the UPU and took over responsibility for its own mails, the Greytown agency closing the day before. To his final account H.F. Bingham added a draft for £44.6.5 (£44.32) and included postage stamps to the value of £58.2.10 (£58.14).

to be continued

MONKEY BUSINESS IN EL SALVADOR by Bernard Davies

The July 1917 issue of "The Philatelic Gazette", New York, Vol. VII No.7, contained an article by Dr. Victor M. Berthold entitled "Recent Forgeries of the Stamps of El Salvador". Subsequent issues included follow-up articles.

These articles are complicated for today's reader by several matters viz. (1) Misuse of the word 'forgery'; (2) A probable tendency to over-state the quantity of material involved; (3) The taking up of an undue proportion of the articles with discussion of two particular stamps, the 1c and 10c black Ceres 1900 issue "surcharged" (sic) with shield and FRANQUEO OFICIAL; (4) The inclusion of letters and statements representing charge and countercharge, accusation and disclaimer, leaving the case still unproven.

What does seem certain is that, in or about 1916, there appeared in New York various Salvador stamps that had not been seen before. It seems equally certain that some of these stamps were sold by "Mr Samuel C. Dawson of the City of San Salvador, a well-known dealer of Central American issues, to the firm of J.M. Bartels" who returned some of them as "counterfeits". Mr S.C. Dawson is referred to, later in the articles, as "former Postmaster General".

(1) Misuse of the word "forgery". The stamps that appeared in 1916 certainly include some forgeries, notably of the shield overprints of 1900 (SG 431-7 & 438-47; Scott 253-62 & 263-9) and of the 1905 overprints (for example SG 539; 541; 545; 557: Scott 294; 299; 305; 326; etc.). This is possibly also true of some of the stamps involving surcharges on the Monument issue of 1903 (within the range SG 522-31: Scott 313-23). However the majority of the "counterfeit" stamps seen by the present writer are BOGUS creations, not forgeries. They consist of the application of genuine original handstamps, electrotypes and punches to genuine original (or in some cases "genuine reprint") stamps, some of which have been genuinely postally used but whether in their original state or in their overprinted state it is not always possible to say. The point is that the genuine handstamp etc. is applied to a genuine stamp which did not originally receive that overprint. It would seem that some employee of the postal department must have had access to the original handstamps, electrotypes and punches, which he then applied to various El Salvador stamps from late Seebeck period to 1903. Whether he did this for his own amusement or to achieve illicit profit through "the ingenuity of man" must remain a matter for conjecture. This article ends by noting some of the creations which he has seen.

(2) Over-stating of quantity. At one point in the Berthold articles, the appearance of these supposed "new issues" is described as a "flood", but the present writer has found them far more difficult to obtain than are the corresponding genuine issues. With the possible exception of the 1905 "forgeries", he suspects that there are very few of these creations to be discovered nowadays.

(3) The black 1900. The writer has seen only two copies of this creation, but the lengthy argument in the Berthold articles about their status - new issues, new discovery, printer's proof, printer's waste, imitation reprint; catalogued or not catalogued by Yvert - was doubtless prompted by their being on offer at "ten dollars each U.S. gold", a considerable sum in those days.

(4) Letters of accusation and disclaimer. Probaly Dr Berthold was concerned to warn off the unwary collector without making absolutely specific charges; alternatively his journalistic instincts may have delighted in a "mystery".

It would seem to be logical to divide these counterfeits into four groups;-

1. Forgeries (i.e. imitations of actual stamps, sufficiently like their originals to be capable of deceiving). There are such of the De Oficio overprint (Gibbons type 051), of the Shields (Gibbons types 66 & 67) where the main characteristics are that the forgeries have not so prominent a neck to the shield, and the letters DGC are blurred or not clearly visible, and the 1905 overprints.

2. Proofs or Trials. Possibly the black Ceres 1900 stamps which take up so much of Dr Berthold's article may fall into this category, although they may equally well be printer's waste or they may be totally bogus.

3. Totally bogus creations (although the basic stamps may be genuine enough). Into such a category fall a small 1905 overprint (two types, of about the size of a normal office date handstamp) and a larger italic 1905 overprint (appearing once on some stamps, at all four directions on others). Possibly the perfin numbers on Escalon envelopes may be thus; as may the perfin 1 on 1c SG 0374 with wheel.

4. Bogus creations using genuine handstamps etc. This seems to be the largest category. It includes the use of the De Oficio overprint (Gibbons type 051) on the 1903 Monument issue (SG 486-96, except 491) and its postage dues (D508, 510, 511), on the Seebeck orange dues (D347, D348, D349) and on some of the 1900 Ceres stamps without wheel; the latest in date of this lot to be seen by the writer is the 1911 Insurrection 12c SG 657. Then the Shield (Gibbons type 67) and the electrotyped Shield (type 68) are found on some stamps of the Monument set, the Ceres set and the Seebeck Rep. Mayor set. Wheels exist on stamps that never properly received them and surcharges appear on incorrect values of the 1903 set (e.g. 1c on 20c) or wrongly in purple ink (5c on 12c for example). Even the twelve-hole punch used in 1899 and 1900 to revalidate for postage certain official stamps (type 62 Gibbons) was used to create fantasies - on SG D507 and D509 for example.

The writer would be interested to hear from anyone who can extend the listing. He would also be interested to hear from anyone who can tell him more about "Mr Figueroa" whose "stock" and "fakes" are alleged to form part of the material discussed in Dr Berthold's article.

PRIVATE TREATY OFFERS

Guatemala

GUATEMALA

501 SG 149	114 unmounted mint copies in various size blocks	£4½
502 SG 155	bottom half-sheet of 50 unmounted mint	£3½
503 SG 167	95 unmounted mint copies in various size blocks	£4½
504 SG 223	perforated overprint OFICIAL, unmounted & inverted mint block of four, showing all four positions.	£3½
505	1930 Postal Memorandum used as f.d.c. Guatemala-Quezaltenango	£15
506 SG 1014-25	with three m.s. u.m.	£5½
507 SG 697, 698, 699, 701	in unmounted mint sheets of 50	£4

EL SALVADOR

507 SG 888-91	Canas mint	£4
508 SG 981-84	UPU mint	£4
509 SG 1328-43	Football mint	£7½

Most sets from 1281 to 1327 are available at half catalogue, mint

NICARAGUA

510 SG 1120-45	Baseball, mint	£11
511 SG 616c	PAA mint pair	£6½
512 SG 1184-96	Presidential airs on 2 addressed registered f.d.c.'s	£2
513 SG 1870-3	Baseball on unaddressed f.d.c.	£1
514 SG 1827-38	Interpol on 3 unaddressed f.d.c.'s	£1
515 SG 1074-79	Roosevelt postage on unaddressed f.d.c.	£1
516 SG 2087-98	Rare Stamps on 2 unaddressed f.d.c.'s	£2
517 SG 2104-2112	Zeppelin on 2 unaddressed f.d.c.'s	£1½
518 SG 2201	O'Higgins unaddressed f.d.c.	£2½
519 SG 2202-7	Flowers unaddressed f.d.c.	£1

THE HONDURAS - SALVADOR AGREEMENT (Extract from the UPU English text 'L'Union Postale' VI/9 1st September 1881)

A postal Convention has recently been concluded between the Republics of S. Salvador and Honduras, which may be considered as an important step towards the improvement of the postal relations between the two States.

The mails are to be conveyed by the Pacific Ocean steamers, as well as by the territorial services which are already in existence, or may still be established. The provisions concerning the use to be made of the steamer and territorial services show that both Administrations are desirous of making extensive use of every regular means of transmission, and of affording each other every possible facility.

The rates of postage on letters exchanged between S. Salvador and Honduras are fixed as follows;- up to ½ ounce in weight, ½ real; from ½ to 1 ounce in weight, 1 real; for every additional ounce, 1 real.

The postage on printed matter (with the exception of newspapers) is fixed at the rate of 4 reales per pound, while the newspapers published in either Republic are forwarded free of charge.

The articles of correspondence are not liable to any charge in addition to the postage.

The transmission of coin or valuable articles in letters or in printed papers is prohibited. If nevertheless such articles are found in letters, &c. they are to be confiscated by the postal officers for the profit of the Administration.

Official articles exchanged between the two Republics are exempt from the payment of postage; and, in order to be treated as such by both the Republics, they must be provided with the seal of the despatching authority.

The letter-secrecy is reciprocally guaranteed.

This Convention is provisionally to remain in force during a period of four years, and, afterwards, to continue in force for periods of one year, if none of the parties give notice to the contrary.

NICARAGUA 1911 - An "UNKNOWN" overprint? by Kilian Nathan

The cover shown on the next page bears together with the 15 centavos stamp SG 285; Scott 244, 2 TELEGRAPH stamps (Yvert No. 109) overprinted with 2 bars over the word "TELEGRAFOS".

First it should probably be said that this cover, as well as the stamps are 100% genuine and in NO way a fake.

Second, this stamp with the 2 bars over the word "TELEGRAFOS" is not listed or mentioned in ANY catalogue.

Now, everybody interested in NICARAGUA philately knows that especially in 1911 the country was in very bad need of postage stamps. The Government had even to reach out for the Railway - Coupon - Fiscal stamps and overprinted them on the back for postal use. So it wouldn't be very surprising that also remainders of telegraph stamps were overprinted in some way in order to revalidate them for postage.

If one can accept this thesis, it must also be said that most certainly complete sheets of 100 or at least part-sheets of 50 or 25 stamps must have been so overprinted. But ...., this is the only example of such stamps I have ever seen or heard of. Is it a real great rarity in Nicaragua philately and maybe unique owing to the fact that only one or two sheets were overprinted and no mint stamps saved and all used stamps thrown away and destroyed?

Is there anybody who could give an answer to this, i.e. has anybody seen or heard of such a stamp before?

The bars over the word "TELEGRAFOS" are PRINTED in black (not hand-applied with black ink). They are 15mm long and the separation between the 2 bars is 0.5mm.

Any comment or information in connection with this "provisional" stamp would be welcome. Being genuine, shouldn't it be catalogued, and awarded equal status with the other provisionals of the period? Pricing would be difficult unless more copies emerge.

NICARAGUA

1910 - 1911

Distance between VALE and cts. = 4mm

Stamps of 1909 overprinted: VALE

10 cts.

Cover from La Libertad to New York

Cancelled La Libertad November 4, 1911
Transit postmark Juigalpa Nov. 5, 1911
Transit postmark Managua Nov. 7, 1911
Transit postmark Corinto Nov. 8, 1911

This is an extremely rare cover; even the stamps are in bad shape. The use of these Telegraph stamps must be UNIQUE! The stamps with two bars over TELEGRAFOS are not listed. They are the only stamps of this kind I have ever seen! Also the cancels LA LIBERTAD and JUIGALPA are RRR

5 Estado de 5
América
Central
5 Nicaragua 5